Lecture 4: Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic Period

The Importance of Being Philip
- King Philip II (359-336)
- Philip creates new standing army
  - Gold from Mt. Pangaeus
  - Combined cavalry with infantry
  - Created a longer spear (sarissa)
  - Could move in square, line, wedge
- Philip conquers and unifies Greece
- Philip is assassinated in 336

Who is Alexander?
- Idealistic visionary, ruthless dictator?
- Alexander assassinates his father?  
- Alexander the Great
- Groomed for kingship by his father Philip
- In 336 Alexander becomes king at 20
- Alexander and universal humanity
- Alexander’s conquests trigger “Hellenistic Age”

Alexander the Conquers the World
- Alexander invades Persia in 334
- Alexander’s army is small
- Granicus 334
- Issus 333
- Gaugamela (331) he defeats Darius
- From Persia Alexander will attack…
- Alexander dies in 323 (after a party?)

The Hellenistic Kingdoms
- Alexander dies in 323 and his empire is divided among his generals
  - Macedonia – Antigonid dynasty
  - Syria and the east – Seleucids
  - Pergamum – Attalids
  - Egypt – Ptolemies
- The Hellenistic Monarchies
- Industry spread from Greece to the east
- Trade connected the Greeks with the India and beyond

Hellenistic Society
- Nobility (gentry) women
  - Gained greater opportunities
  - The ability to form alliances through marriage
  - Women in management positions
- However, for most;
  - “keeping house, remaining within, and taking care of husbands belongs to women.”
• Hellenistic society saw an increase in slavery
  – As always slaves were, kidnapped, prisoners, and debtors
  – As always most in domestic service
  – Slavery contributed to the process of acculturation
• Education becomes public
  – Gymnasium

Hellenistic Art and Science
• Library of Alexandria
• City of Pergamum
• Literature and Theater
  – Menander (342-291)
  – Polybius (203-120)
• Moved from idealistic form to emotional/realistic form
• Astronomy
  – Aristarchus of Samos (heliocentric)
  – Eratosthenes
• Euclid is famous for his thesis *The Elements*
• Archimedes (287-212) was the most famous scientist of the era
  – Figured Pi
  – Archimedean Screw
  – Fantastic siege engines

Hellenistic Philosophy
• Both Epicureanism and Stoicism sought to give ataraxia (peace of mind)
• Epicurus (341-270)
  – The aim of life was pleasure
  – The highest pleasure was absence of pain
  – Pleasure of the mind was preferable to that of the body
• Zeno (c.336-c.265 B.C.)
  – Single, divine plan governed the universe
  – Happiness was finding harmony divine plan.
  – Divine Reason (Logos)
• Skeptics
  – There is no true knowledge
• Politics was the hobby of a few wealthy citizens

The Development of Mystery Cults
• Greeks gods come in the Hellenistic package
• What makes up a mystery religion?
• Three popular cults include that of Isis, Mithras, and Dionysus
• Syncretism was the rule of the day except for Jews